



## TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER

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### PRESS RELEASE

## Land Office helps turn Eagle Otome spill into better parks for Port Arthur

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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AUSTIN — Port Arthur parks will soon get upgrades worth more than \$313,000 as part of a settlement the General Land Office has reached over the Eagle Otome spill, which put nearly 397,000 gallons of crude oil into the Port Arthur Ship Channel.

Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson announced today American Eagle Tankers has agreed to pay more than \$313,000 to improve Walter Umphrey Park, as well as the historic Sabine Pass Battleground State Historic Site, where a small but determined band of Confederate soldiers beat back four Union gunboats in 1863.

"Thanks to our planning and pre-positioned manpower and equipment, an environmental catastrophe was avoided," Patterson said. "This settlement will be a great benefit to Port Arthur and help preserve part of our state's history. That's a good deal by any account."

On Jan. 23, 2010, the Eagle Otome collided with a barge, ripping a hole in its hull and causing the biggest Texas oil spill in 20 years. But an immediate response from the General Land Office's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Team, the U.S. Coast Guard and area first-responders contained the spill in the ship channel, protecting Keith Lake in the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area, one of the most pristine estuarine reserves in the state.

Details of the settlement released by Patterson today include the construction of 10 covered picnic pavilions, a volleyball court and a basketball court at Walter Umphrey worth nearly \$114,000. Improvements to the Sabine Pass Battleground total nearly \$200,000 and include dredging the boat launch and lagoon, building covers over the historic earthen ammunition bunkers to protect them from further erosion, shade shelters, a custom fish cleaning station and the installation of the USS *Clifton's* "walking beam" steam engine part at the site where it was disabled. American Eagle Tankers will also pay an \$86,600 administrative penalty to the state's Coastal Protection Fund, which funds the Land Office's Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program.

The USS *Clifton* led the Federal Navy's charge on the Confederate fort, guns blazing. Confederate soldiers, under the command of Dick Dowling, sunk it. The walking beam

is the largest remaining relic from the wreck and currently undergoing restoration after years on public display at Beaumont's Riverside Park.

"Our Oil Spill Prevention and Response Team is world-renowned for its preparedness and response capability," Patterson said. "In other states, this spill would have been an environmental disaster - but here in Texas, we know how to take care of our coast, and our history. Texans should be proud."

The Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1991 (OSPRA) designated the Texas General Land Office as the lead state agency for preventing and responding to oil spills in the marine environment. To learn more, go to [www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/caring-for-the-coast/oil-spills/index.html](http://www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/caring-for-the-coast/oil-spills/index.html) .

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